

VIEWS ON CHATTANOOGA'S GREATEST STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

--Compiled by Venture volunteer Jeanne McNew from over 500 questionnaires responded to by Venture Members.

Chattanooga Venture has given us the unique opportunity of looking at Chattanooga through the eyes of over 500 people--enabling us to "see" our city as we have never before seen it. What a fascinating experience this is!

Almost 99% of the listed "Greatest Strengths" of Chattanooga were glowing praises of our beautiful natural scenery and our wonderful people.

Venture Members were asked to list the community's greatest strengths, greatest weaknesses and the issues which they felt should be addressed first for the good of the community's future.

The comments in this summary are listed in order according to the highest number on each subject, in each category.

-- Jeanne McNew

CHATTANOOGA'S GREATEST STRENGTHS:

Natural Resources - Scenic Beauty - Location

- "God's gift of abundant natural resources"
- "Our mountains and our lakes are so beautiful"
- "Tremendous natural resources, including leisure opportunities"
- "Great place to live; mountains, lakes and fairly free of congestion"
- "Geographic positioning"
- "Many natural scenic attractions"
- "Desirable living areas, rivers, lakes"
- "Relatively close to Smokey Mountains"
- "Central location to Knoxville, Nashville and Atlanta"
- "Better than average environment for children"

Our People - Quality of Life

- "The people are honest and sincere"
- "Morally good"
- "Friendly and concerned persons"
- "The interest and enthusiasm of its residents"
- "Hard working people"
- "People committed to families, moral and ethical values"
- "People of strong personal faith who care for one another"
- "Comfortable life pace"
- "Low cost of living"
- "Not so large as to be unconcerned about individuals"
- "The feeling of a small town"
- "Diverse population"

Churches - Religion

- "We are bound by religion"
- "Our outstanding churches"
- "Christian environment"
- "Religious cultural heritage"
- "Religious population"
- "Our downtown churches pulling together!"
- "Peace abides"

Historic Heritage

"Our unique history cannot be taken away or used by anyone else"

"Historic wealth rarely equaled anywhere in the U.S."

"Our Civil War history"

"Preserve our history"

Miscellaneous Subjects

"UTC"

"TVA"

"Health facilities"

"Active Foundations"

"Museums"

"Symphony"

"Theatre groups"

"Strong private schools"

"Tourism"

"Recreation"

Chattanooga Venture received numerous "praises" and "thanks"

CHATTANOOGA'S GREATEST WEAKNESSES:

As great as the pleasure in reading about our beautiful scenic city and wonderful people, is the surprise at reading the comments about our city's weaknesses. These emphatic comments by our members are expressed as evidence of deep-seated concerns and interests that have long awaited expression--they are truly more than just "concerned".

By a large majority, the members listed as our greatest weaknesses our government, community leadership and city image. The next two subjects, economy and pollution, were almost equal in importance.

City Government - Leadership - Image

"No citizen input into government"

"Lack of vision in leadership"

"Politicians not responsive to broad range of citizenry"

"No leadership, too much fellowship"

"Divided local governments"

"Too much domination by small groups without enough wide range vision"

"Few people who call most shots"

"Petty entanglements in local government"

City Government - Leadership - Image (cont.)

- "City policies run by elite hierarchy"
- "Self-centered elected officials"
- "Lack of cooperation between governments"
- "Some City Commission members are reluctant to ever 'change', preventing progress"
- "A few people with money make most of the decisions"
- "Political bickering"
- "Antiquated, ineffective system of government"
- "No great leadership"
- "Ultra-conservative attitude"
- "Tunnel vision"
- "Uncertainty over who our real leadership people are and where they will lead us"
- "Chattanooga is a growing city with a small town mentality"
- "We have a misconception that we do not have any control over what goes on in the community"
- "Chattanooga is an old product which must become new"
- "Horse and buggy community"
- "The communities are segmented, each running like a mini-government"
- "Atlanta shadow effect"
- "Lack of tooting our own horn"

Economic Profile - Labor Unions - Employment - Industry

- "Lack of clean innovative businesses"
- "Too dependent on 'smoke-stack' industries"
- "Losing our young people to larger cities with more opportunity"
- "Unemployment above average"
- "Too much reliance on manufacturing and not enough on hi-tech service groups"
- "Status quo attitude"
- "Poor image in labor and economics created in last 25 years"
- "Too many marginal industries"
- "Manufacturing economy has been hurt--we must learn to compete"
- "No opportunities for our children"
- "Large number of small businesses go under"
- "We talk as though unions are preventing economic development--poppycock!"

Economic Profile (cont.)

- "Misconception of Chattanooga as a union town"
- "Heavy dependence on industry for jobs"
- "Lack of jobs for women and minorities"
- "Poor marketing image"
- "No jobs for youth upon completion of college"
- "Too many strikes and labor unrest"

Pollution: Air and Visual

- "No one seems to do anything about it"
- "Poor air quality"
- "Trash and litter everywhere"
- "Man-made ugliness"
- "Eyesores"
- "Big companies polluting our local area as if it's a public convenience"
- "Overall visual image one of our greatest weaknesses"
- "An appearance that lacks pride and confidence"
- "Stodgy architecture"
- "Non-uniformity of tourist signs"
- "Ugly entrances to city"
- "View of city from interstate is horrible"
- "Weak regulations for aesthetics of area"
- "Streets and roads are filthy"
- "No organized planning"
- "No parks for strolling, walking or recreation"
- "Street uncleanliness"
- "Brush only picked up every 2 or 3 months"
- "Trash pick up poorly handled"
- "Signs are a blight"
- "Trash is everywhere"
- "Commercialism is destroying our natural beauty"

Racial - Cultural Issues

- "Lack of communication"
- "Racial distrust"
- "Lack of cultural advantages for minorities"
- "People who contribute nothing--but demand equal this and equal that without equal output"

Racial - Cultural Issues (cont.)

- "Weak commitment to desegregation process expressed in relationship of races"
- "Emotional attitudes between races"
- "People that interrupt our civic process and discourage new business"
- "A town in which bigotry flourishes"
- "Unaware of many cultures represented and willingness to ignore different cultures"

Public Schools

- "No educational opportunities in our schools"
- "Lack of citizens' support"
- "Too many drugs in our schools"
- "We need school leadership"
- "Educational job training"
- "Improve our educational system"
- "There is a lack of support for public education everywhere"
- "Lack of good schools"
- "Primary and secondary schools are inadequate"

Miscellaneous Subjects

Better law enforcement; public transportation; senior citizens' needs; more work on drug problem; a shelter for our runaway youth; extensive historical preservation; a better airport; battered women's center; better newspapers; lower utility rates; bike and running trails.

CHATTANOOGA'S FIRST ISSUES:

The members did more than just list the "First Issues" that should be discussed for the betterment of all Chattanooga--many gave suggestions of how to help some of the problems. The three greatest weaknesses were also the three "first priorities"--Government, Economy, Pollution.

Government - Leadership - Image

- "Elect and appoint statesmen and leaders who are capable and willing to work for the best of all Chattanoogaans"
- "Have one voice for City, County and private sectors"
- "Don't talk too much and do too little"
- "Have metro government headed by young, educated and forward-thinking individuals"

Government - Leadership - Image (cont.)

- "Tap the available potential leadership in Chattanooga"
- "Fear control by certain parties"
- "Don't accept low level performance by public officials"
- "Have more citizen input into city government"
- "Venture is a good way to start"

Economic Profile

- "Attract industries through improvement of existing resources"
- "Hi-tech is the future"
- "Bring in more outside investments"
- "Build up business along the waterfront"
- "Reach out to our youth"
- "Cut tax deal, or whatever, to attract auto plants and other non-financial manufacturing industries"
- "Utilize river in an industrial capacity"
- "Get broad-based hi-tech industry to locate here"
- "Challenge young people to remain in the community"
- "Don't forget the potential of the river"
- "More tourism"
- "Convert Walnut Street Bridge into a walkway with shops"
- "Why drive to Atlanta to spend money? Get Rich's, Lord & Taylor and Saks to build a mall here"
- "Upgrade downtown for better shops, restaurants and more businesses"
- "Try 'Workfare' (a welfare-related program)"

Pollution: Air/Visual

- "Citation to property owners that won't keep up property"
- "Need a viable ordinance on signs and billboards developed by the tourist industry, sign companies and local citizens"
- "Enforce fines!"
- "Public must rise to this challenge"
- "Clean up the city first so we can really see what we have to work with"
- "Need a concerted effort to clean up 'trash' and stop this problem"
- "Enforce better environmental controls"
- "Eliminate billboards and overhead wiring"
- "Do away with ugly views of local industry that mar our beauty"

Pollution: Air/Visual (cont.)

- "Pressure or means for property upkeep legislation"
- "Revitalize our downtown area"
- "Clean up air pollution"
- "Clean up water pollution"
- "Make all of Chattanooga an attractive and clean city"
- "Clean up--fix up--join up!"
- "News media cooperation can enhance this effort against our pollution"

Public Schools

- "Change inner city schools"
- "Education must be our first priority"
- "Good public schools to be supported by all"
- "Get school leadership"
- "Make public schools as good as private schools"

Racial Issues

- "Must learn to accept people of different backgrounds and cultures"
- "Learn to live together, we have to live in the same city"
- "Need communication"
- "Need more tolerance"
- "Interracial cooperation"

Miscellaneous Subjects

- "Better law enforcement against crime"
- "A Chattanooga magazine"
- "Build a riverport"
- "Wider roads and highways"
- "More recreational opportunities for tourists"
- "Have a zoo"

One member summed it all up this way: "Let's decide what we want to be when we grow up!"